VISIT…

Dreaming In Colour

Exploring Cinema's Brighter Side

thebigpicture

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'My dear Livy, not even the best magician in the world can produce a rabbit out of a hat if there is not already a rabbit in the hat.'
Boris Lermontov

COVER IMAGE THE RED SHOES (COURTESY PARK CIRCUS LTD.)

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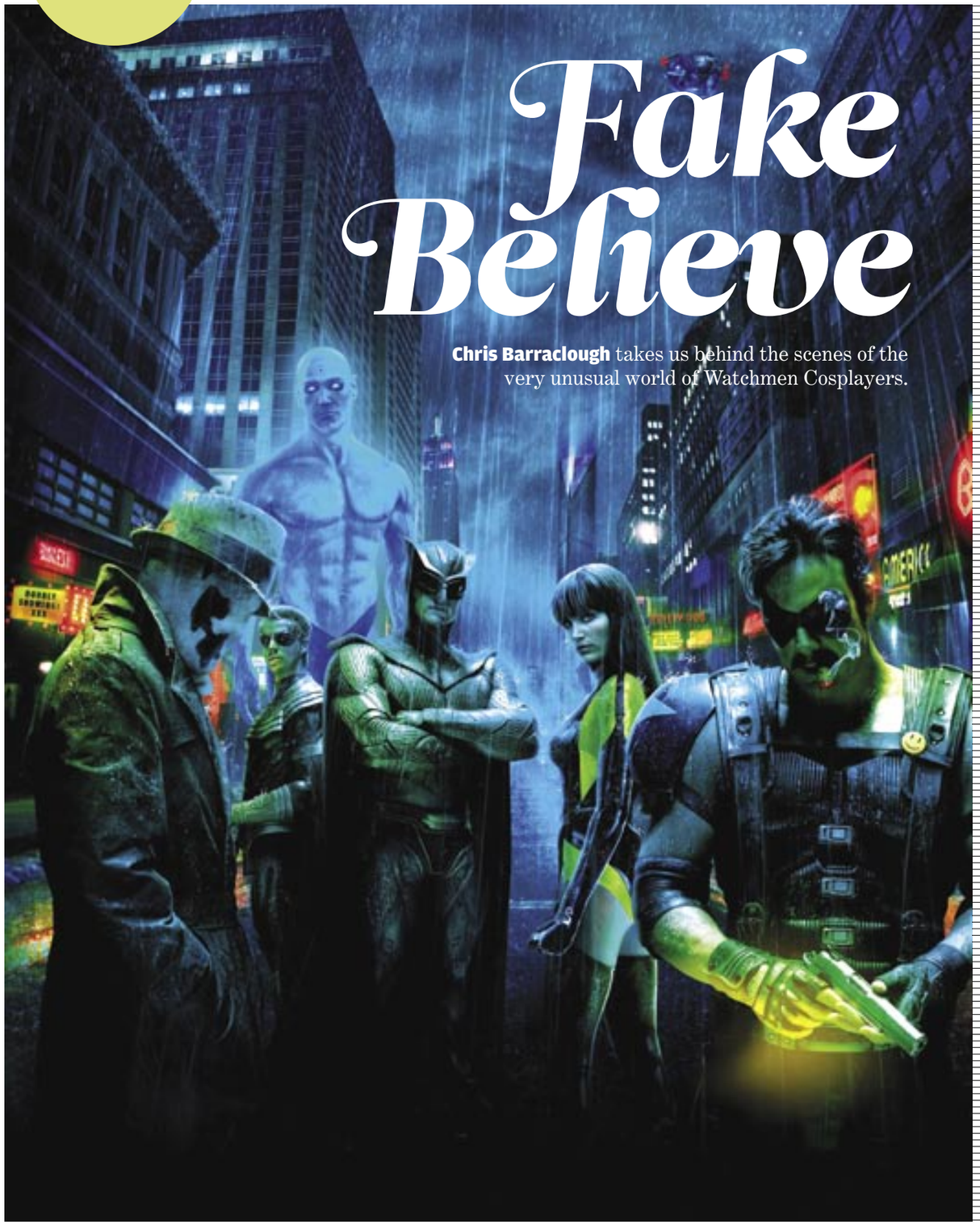


Fake Believe

Chris Barraclough takes us behind the scenes of the very unusual world of Watchmen Cosplayers.

M.CUBICLE AS *Mothman*

'I sliced my finger open making those damn wings.'

TOHMA AS *Rorschach*

'no one realises I'm actually a woman until I talk.'

LADY.S AS *Silk Spectre*

'If you're in pain, you can't see, or you can't move, then you're doing it right.'

Washed-up, living in the distant glory of their youth, and despised by the very people they vowed to protect, the Watchmen aren't typical heroes but they do enjoy the same inner conflict and mass loathing that blights most comic book characters.

It's the complex characterization that won the original novel such great praise, including a spot in *Time Magazine*'s Top 100 list, and prompted *300* director Zack Snyder to shoot a three-hour long 're-imagining' of the work (much to reclusive writer Alan Moore's chagrin). Even before the movie version, it was possible to see the *Watchmen* brought to life, walking around our city streets and posing for photos with fans. Costume role players, or 'cosplayers' for short, have been dressing as their favourite characters for years now, for conventions, charity events or simply hitting the town with some like-minded friends.

'I chose [to cosplay as] Rorschach because I absolutely love his character,' says Tohma, a member of a *Watchmen* cosplay society. 'His never-compromise badass approach to life is exciting and fun. With the movie coming out, I knew it would be a costume that people would start to recognise, even if they didn't know it previously.'

This increasingly popular hobby takes a great deal of dedication: getting the costumes just right can be a laborious process, one which involves scouring markets, home shows and that old fail-safe eBay for the perfect material. Even styling a wig – or, for the brave, their own hair – can take several hours. The end results are often impressive, and make quite an impact in public. 'I love wearing my costume because I love the attention I get,' says Lady S, who chose Sally Jupiter as her character. 'I really get into character by hamming it up for the camera, when normally I'm a behind-the-scenes kind of girl. You can't be upset when you get lots of attention wearing a crazy costume.'

'The costume gets an incredible amount of attention and love from both men and women,' agrees Tohma. 'While I was walking around Downtown Atlanta, a group of people actually got all excited because they knew who I was. They ran up and got pictures with me. I even scared one woman as she was coming out of an elevator. One of the most amusing parts is the fact that no one realises I'm actually female until I talk.'

Sometimes the attention can be unwanted however, especially when the costumes are a little on the skimpy side.

'I realised that I need to fix the corset to cover my chest better,' Lady S admits. 'I've found some pictures online of just that, which upsets me.'

There can also be issues with practicality, as group leader Cleo points out.

'My Silk Spectre II costume was not very practical,' she says. 'If I bent over, the yellow top was pulled up and basically all of my ass would show. Plus this was in March, so I was absolutely frozen most of the time. My boyfriend was dressed as Rorschach, and he had the opposite problem in that he was boiling hot and could barely see where he was going; not only did the mask restrict his vision, but he couldn't wear his glasses with it.'

Lady S also had a similar experience, having worn boots a size too small for an entire day to make her outfit as authentic as possible. 'It's like I always say about costuming,' she says. 'If you're in pain, you can't see, or you can't move, then you're doing it right.' **[tbp]**

FIND OUT MORE:
The Watchmen *Cosplay group can be found on* Live Journal, *at: community.livejournal.com/watchmencosplay*

All images kindly supplied by those interviewed.

OPPOSITE IF THE SHOE FITS
LEFT MAKING FACES

Images courtesy of Park Circus Limited

EVOCATIVE COLOUR ONSCREEN

Bright Ideas

'Colour films have to be lit,' wrote Roger Ebert. 'But black and white films have to be illuminated.' Some critics have always harboured a prejudice against colour as opposed to monochrome cinematography. **Scott Jordan Harris** chooses six examples that expose the ignorance of that attitude and demonstrate cinema's most evocative use of colour.

The Red Shoes (1948) Dirs. Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger

Dr Herbert Kalmus (who devised Technicolor) and his spectacularly estranged wife, Natalie (who is credited as Technicolor consultant on around 350 productions), did not agree on much – but both maintained that, of all the pictures ever filmed in colour, *The Red Shoes* was the finest. Powell and Pressburger's majestic masterpiece sits at the pinnacle of British film: its centre piece sequence – the 14-minute 'Ballet of The Red Shoes' – displaying a command of colour equal to the mastery of montage shown by Sergei Eisenstein in *Battleship Potemkin*'s massacre on the Odessa steps.

To see *The Red Shoes* is to feel a film reaching beyond the accepted bounds of filmmaking and stretching itself, as Barry Norman noted, in 'an attempt to fuse music, dance and drama… into something that comes as close as possible to total cinema.' The chance to see it on a big screen, in the sumptuously restored print now available, is an opportunity for an experience as exquisite as any film can afford.

The Red Shoes *is back in UK cinemas from 11th December.* *See page 46 for further details.*

Skies, seas, boats, building interiors and exteriors and, above all, Brigitte Bardot's body are all showcased with rare sumptuousness and impact…

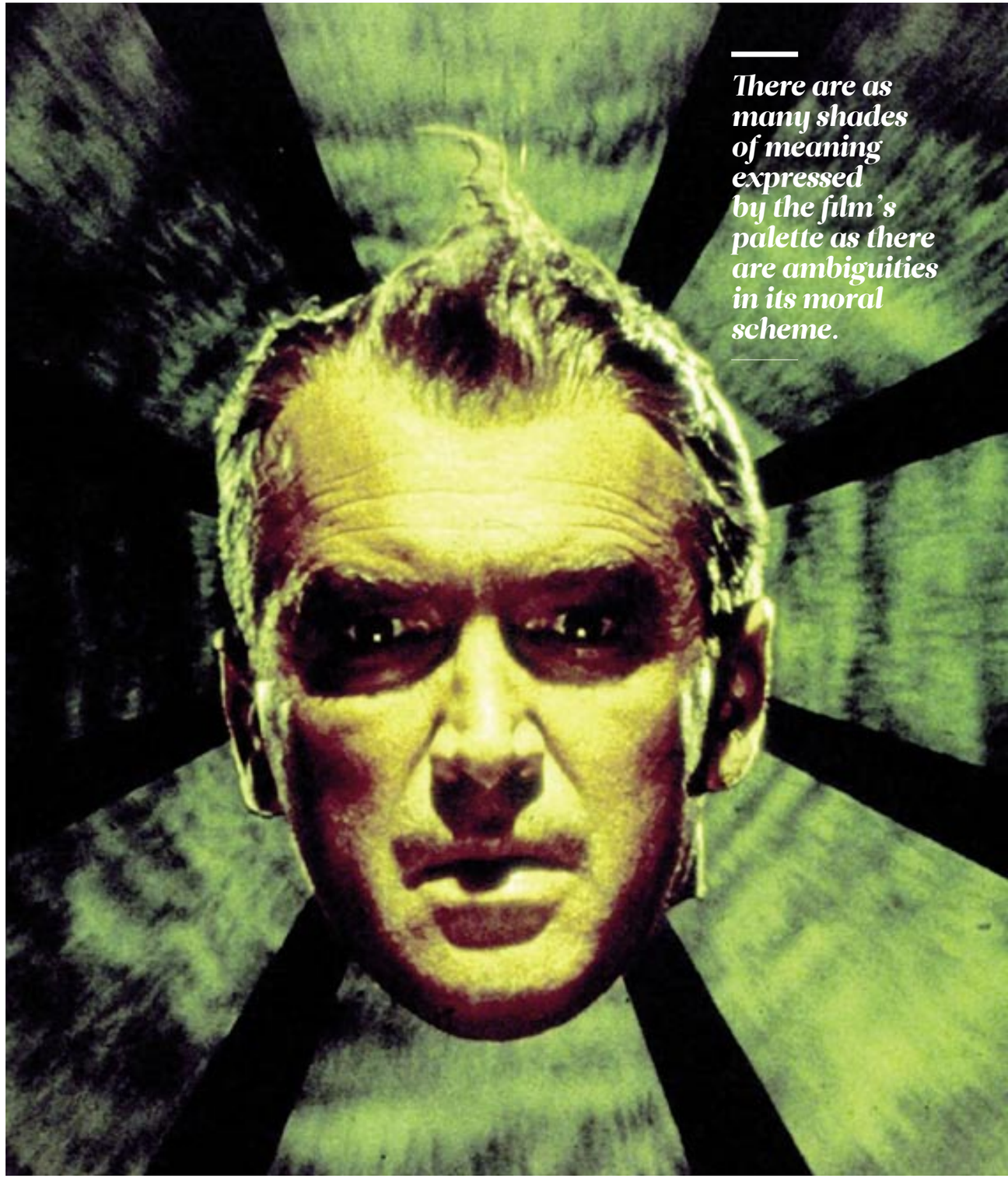
ABOVE MICHEL PICCOLI AND BRIGITTE BARDOT IN *LE MÉPRIS*

Le mépris (1963)
Dir. Jean-Luc Godard

Jean-Luc Godard didn't much rate *Le mépris* – but everyone else did. By the time Martin Scorsese named it as one of his choice of 20 films which made the greatest use of light and colour, 'Contempt', as it is known in English, was already one of those few films granted automatic entry onto almost any serious list of the best movies ever made. Skies, seas, boats, building interiors and exteriors and, above all, Brigitte Bardot's body are all showcased with rare sumptuousness and impact in what is perhaps the finest collaboration between Godard and his frequent cinematographer Raoul Coutard. Indeed, watching *Le mépris*, we realize how great the potential of colour cinematography is and how seldom it is satisfactorily explored.

Vertigo (1957)
Dir. Alfred Hitchcock

Possibly the greatest of the great many Hitchcock classics, *Vertigo* is certainly The Master's most masterly use of colour. Often overlooked in favour of focusing on the film's famously inventive camerawork – which of course includes the ingenious use of the dolly zoom to evoke the feelings of vertigo – the film's colour scheme is just as integral to its effectiveness. With colours chosen to make the audience feel dizzy and even nauseated, and others employed to suggest the disorientation, obsession, and intrusive thoughts James Stewart experiences onscreen, *Vertigo* expertly exploits the disturbing potential of movie colour. There are as many shades of meaning expressed by the film's palette as there are ambiguities in its moral scheme. Calling *Vertigo* 'dark' is reductive on every level.



There are as many shades of meaning expressed by the film's palette as there are ambiguities in its moral scheme.

Kobal (2)

They Live (1988)
Dir. John Carpenter

This brilliant B-movie-with-a-message shows that a strong and inventive aesthetic scheme can free a film from a budgetary straitjacket…

ABOVE THE TRUTH IS REVEALED IN *THEY LIVE*

Excepting El Santo and Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, few professional wrestlers have ever recaptured their in-ring success onscreen – but oft-kilted Canadian 'Rowdy' Roddy Piper pulled it off after Carpenter recruited him to take the lead in this endlessly enjoyable, if semi-sensical, sci-fi satire. Piper plays itinerant builder George Nada, who discovers a suspicious sunglasses' factory whilst staying in a shanty town. He pops on a pair of the specs – and until now we haven't noticed the colour scheme. Suddenly, Nada can see the world in black and white.

And what he sees is that many of America's financial elite are actually alien overlords, enslaving us avaricious earthlings. Looking at advertisements, he reads their true messages: 'OBEY', 'CONSUME', 'STAY ASLEEP'. Looking at a dollar bill he sees: 'THIS IS YOUR GOD'. This brilliant B-movie-with-a-message shows that a strong and inventive aesthetic scheme can free a film from a budgetary straitjacket and create an incredible interplay of monochrome and colour. What's more, it features the most macho punch-up since *The Quiet Man* and ends with the most shocking nude scene since *Sleepaway Camp*.

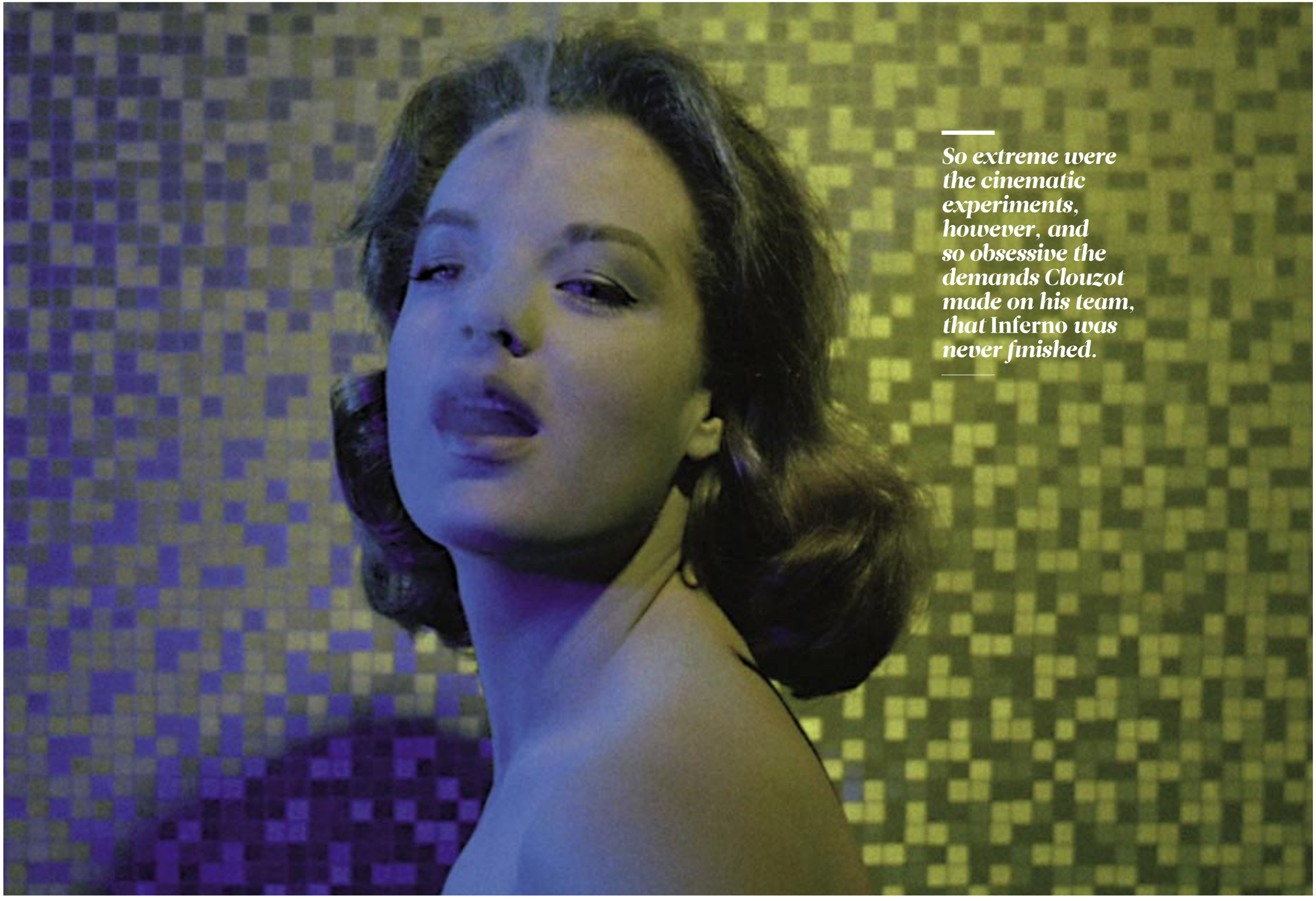
The Three Colours Trilogy (1993–94)
Dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski

The rootless youths… are united not by martial aims or military order but the simple need to anchor themselves to other human beings.

ABOVE IRENE JACOB IN *THREE COLOURS: RED*

Few films have ever made such evocative use of colour as *The Three Colours Trilogy*. Each of the episodes – *Blue*, *White* and *Red* – corresponds to a colour in the French flag and explores the value – liberty, equality and fraternity – it represents. Moving through almost every mode of drama (including comedy, tragedy, romance and permutations of the three) and examining everything from the loneliness imposed by wedding night impotence to the loneliness imposed by god-like omnipotence, the scope of the trilogy is astonishing. Even though he pointedly employed a different cinematographer for each instalment, not wanting them to seem too similar, Kieslowski nevertheless delivered one of the most coherent series of films in cinema. And it is chiefly their colour schemes – expressed in everything from shimmering swimming pools to fragile balloons of bubblegum – that bind the episodes so strongly.

Image courtesy of Park Circus Limited



So extreme were the cinematic experiments, however, and so obsessive the demands Clouzot made on his team, that Inferno *was never finished.*

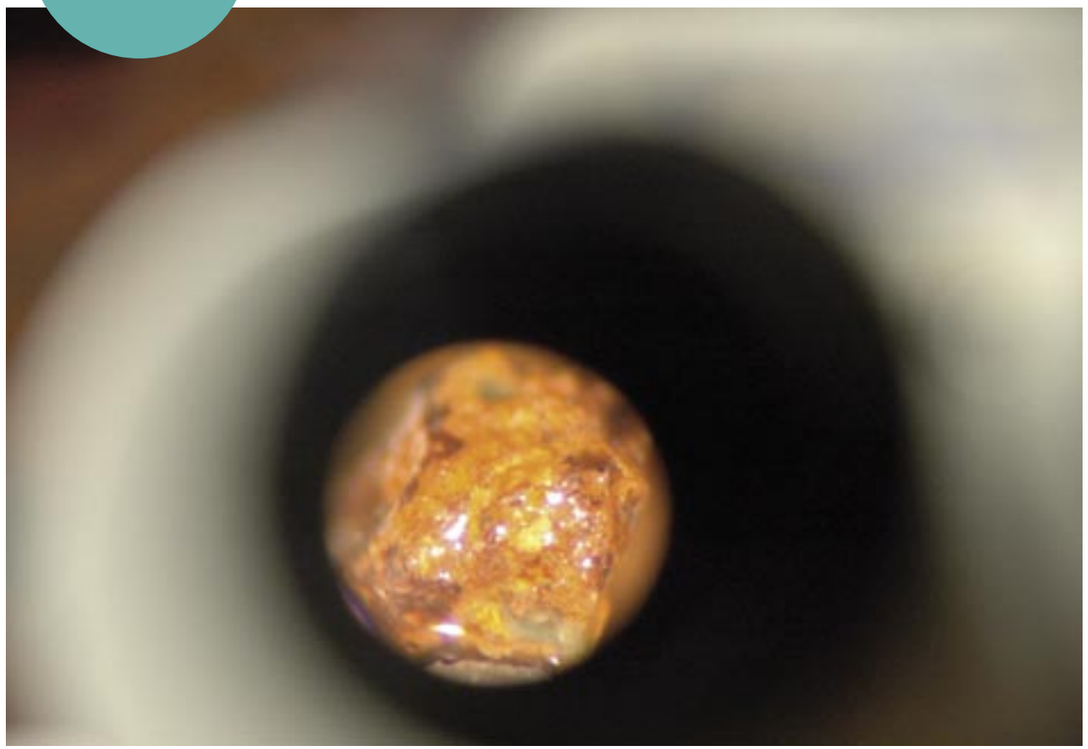
Henri-Georges Clouzot's Inferno (2009)
Dirs. Serge Bromberg & Ruxandra Medrea

In 1964 Henri-Georges Clouzot, director of *Les Diaboliques* and *The Wages of Fear*, attempted to make *Inferno*, which was to have been one of the world's most visually inventive films. The story of an hotelier's psychotic jealously of his wife, it was to contrast reality, filmed in clean black and white, with his jealous nightmares shown in explosions of colour. The hotelier, played by Serge Reggiani, would be a character literally dreaming in colour. The images from his fantasies – particularly the blood-coloured lake and the simple but striking blue lipstick – are powerful, perverse and unforgettable.

So extreme were the cinematic experiments, however, and so obsessive the demands Clouzot made on his team, that *Inferno* was never finished. The director drove Reggiani from the film and, having recruited Jean-Louis Trintignant as a replacement, managed to scare him off without shooting a shot. Nevertheless, Clouzot continued, until finally felled by a heart attack. Now, using interviews with the crew, script readings, and footage from the 185 cans of film Clouzot shot for *Inferno*, Serge Bromberg and Ruxandra Medrea have created one of the great 'making of' documentaries – about a movie that was never made. **[tbp]**

Henri-Georges Clouzot's Inferno *is now showing at selected cinemas nationwide.* *See page 46 for further details.*

alsosee... The Wizard of Oz (1939) / The Picture of Dorian Gray (1945) / A Matter of Life & Death (1946) / Cléo de 5 à 7 (1962) / Schindler's List (1993) / Pleasantville (1993) / Europa (2005) / Sin City (2005)



China Syndrome

John Berra talks with director Lucy Raven about her ambitious film project *China Town*, which has been prompting debates about both its subject matter and unique production method.

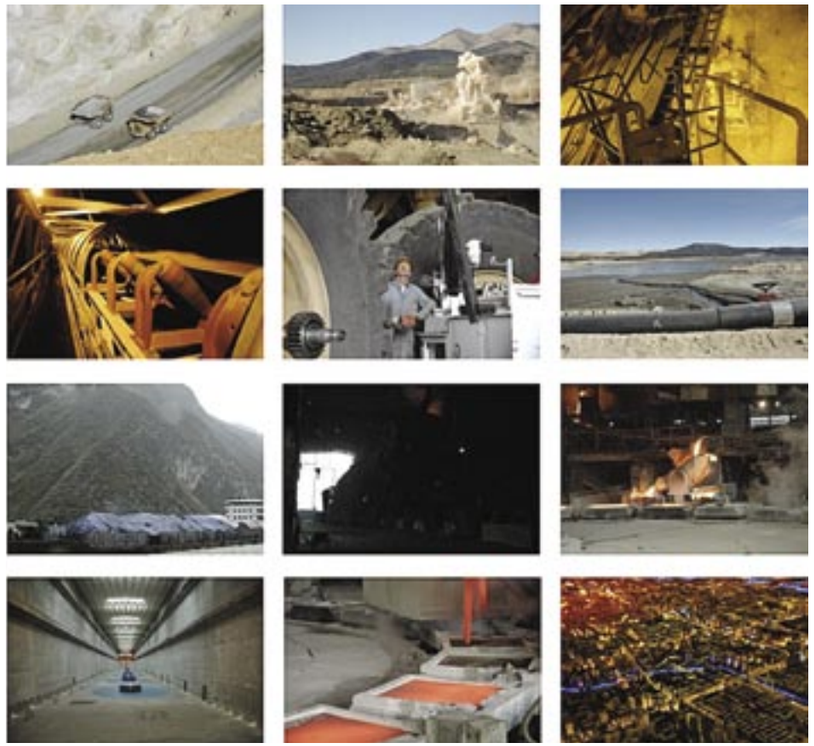
The experimental animation *China Town* is comprised of 7,000 still photographs of varying frame rates edited together to document the global production of copper which, although a necessary process, is one that leads to debates regarding globalization and the conservation of natural resources.

Director Lucy Raven embarked on the project when she was an artist-in-residence at the Centre for Land Use Interpretation in Wendover, Utah, and she spent three years tracking the raw material across the globe, navigating industrial politics in both the United States and China in order to fully document the complexity of commodity production. Remarkably free of geo-political stance, *China Town* dispenses with such conventional documentary techniques as title cards and voice-over to present its audience with a process rather than an argument, thereby allowing viewers to make up their own minds regarding the consequences of such industrial activity, and also the inherent interconnectedness of the current global-economic system. The following interview with Lucy Raven was conducted at the recent Abandon Normal Devices Festival in Liverpool, where *China Town* prompted much discussion regarding both its subject matter and presentation.

I found a lot of inspiration from the early works of Alain Resnais, Jean–Luc Godard and Louis Malle who were all making semi – industrial documentaries…

What was the genesis of *China Town* and what were your starting points in terms of researching the project?
I read a lot about the history of copper mining in the area and there was a book which influenced me when I was starting the film by Rebecca Solnit called *River of Shadows*, which is a biography of Edward Muybridge. In it she talks about a photo which was taken of the transcontinental railroad in the United States; a lot of the labour on the railroad was done by Chinese immigrants, as was the labour at the mines, and there seemed to be a very interesting connection between 100 years ago, when there was Chinese labour being used to get the mines started, and 100 years later when rock is being sent there. I also have a friend who is an economist, and his speciality is China, so I phoned him and had a lot of discussions about the current economic situation, about what it means to be sending rock over there, the relationship between the Renminbi and the dollar, the Asian expansion of Wal-Mart and the bigger picture.

Did you watch a lot of matter-of-fact industrial films when preparing *China Town*?
I watched a lot of films that relate to America in the 1930s, like Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936) where you see the effect of industry on the tramp, and I did watch a lot of documentaries about mining, and a bunch of industrial documentaries; but I found a lot of inspiration from the early works of Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard and Louis Malle who were all making semi-industrial documentaries, and →



ABOVE LIGHTING AMERICA: JUST ONE OF COPPER'S END PRODUCTS
OPPOSITE JUST A FEW OF THE 7,000 FRAMES USED IN THE THE FILM

these seemed more like what I wanted to make because they do not have many exact reference points, they are more a combination of ideas.

There are no title cards or voice-overs in the film. Why did you decide to omit these traditional documentary elements? Did you ever experiment with them whilst editing?
I had imagined a departure from facts into a more poetic narrative. The more involved I got the more apparent it became that copper is one of these great materials where, the more literal you are with it, the more metaphoric it becomes because it is about connectivity. As everyone hates the sound of their own voice when it has been recorded, I didn't want to do a voice-over myself. The decision not to do voice-over came from wanting to get way more intense with how I was shooting and actually really understand the process and piece it together in such a way that a miner would watch it and confirm that is exactly what happens. I also realized that, if you want to know all the technical terms for how copper is made, you can just look on Wikipedia, and that the voice-over would cut the audience off and stop them from actually looking at the material.

Were you tempted to draw a map in animated form, as in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981)?
I tried something like that. I had made some animations which I really liked as pieces in themselves but they looked nostalgic and I think there is already a predilection to look at mining as something that used to be done, and have nostalgia for it, so I cut them out.

How did you pitch the project to mining officials in the States and the management of the smelters in China?
I remember at the Nevada mine, I made it sound like a documentary about how copper goes from the pit to the light bulb and to look at how copper really affects our lives, which was all true, but I didn't necessarily get involved with the other implications. In China, I pretty much said the minimum; that I was making a film about copper production and because I was shooting on a still camera it was less threatening than a video camera.

'It was so hot that I was concerned for the camera and I became really sick in the days that followed due to the sulphuric acid that is produced.'

Were there any challenges with regards to securing access to the smelter in China?
I went to the smelter in China twice, and I had been promised access, and then I got there and they reneged the access; they weren't saying 'no', they were saying, 'we're under maintenance'. When we got there, we found that it was the anniversary of the smelter and all the higher officials were busy, so they got a young, eager guy to show me around, and we were able to convince him that we should look at everything, which was very lucky. But when we got there, he said to me, 'we can't find another mask' and I had never been in that section before and I didn't want anything to stop us, so I said, 'fine, let's go'. We went in and people were wearing full respirators; it was so hot that I became concerned for the camera and I became really sick in the days that followed due to the sulphuric acid that is produced. The ironic part of this is that the United States will not allow a smelter to be built for environmental reasons so they send their rock to China where it's smelted on old US technology.

Did you experience or observe any similarities between the mining community in the United States and the towns in China that are industrially dependent on the smelters?
I wanted to spend more time around the local community in China, but the amount of time I was there, combined with the cultural differences and language barrier, made that really difficult; so there were scenes in America that I cut to make the film more balanced and not too emphatic to the American workers.

Does the title of the film refer to Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974), and the classic line, 'Forget it Jake, it's Chinatown'? The mining companies seem to have a policy of 'open denial' whereby they do not refute anything, but they do not come out and admit anything either. Polanski's film only visits the Chinatown of Los Angeles for its climax, but the title refers more to a state of mind and a universal corruption rather than a specific place.
Exactly; I broke the title into two words because I was thinking of the mining town as a sort of 'China town' in that a town that used to be for Chinese immigrant workers is now a town for China, breaking up natural resources and sending them overseas. But there are obvious associations with the Polanski film, if only because there are big differences between the 1970s and now; then there was a sense of, 'don't worry about it', and now you do have to worry about it. **[tbp]**

For further information visit:
www.lucyraven.com

alsosee... North Country (2005)

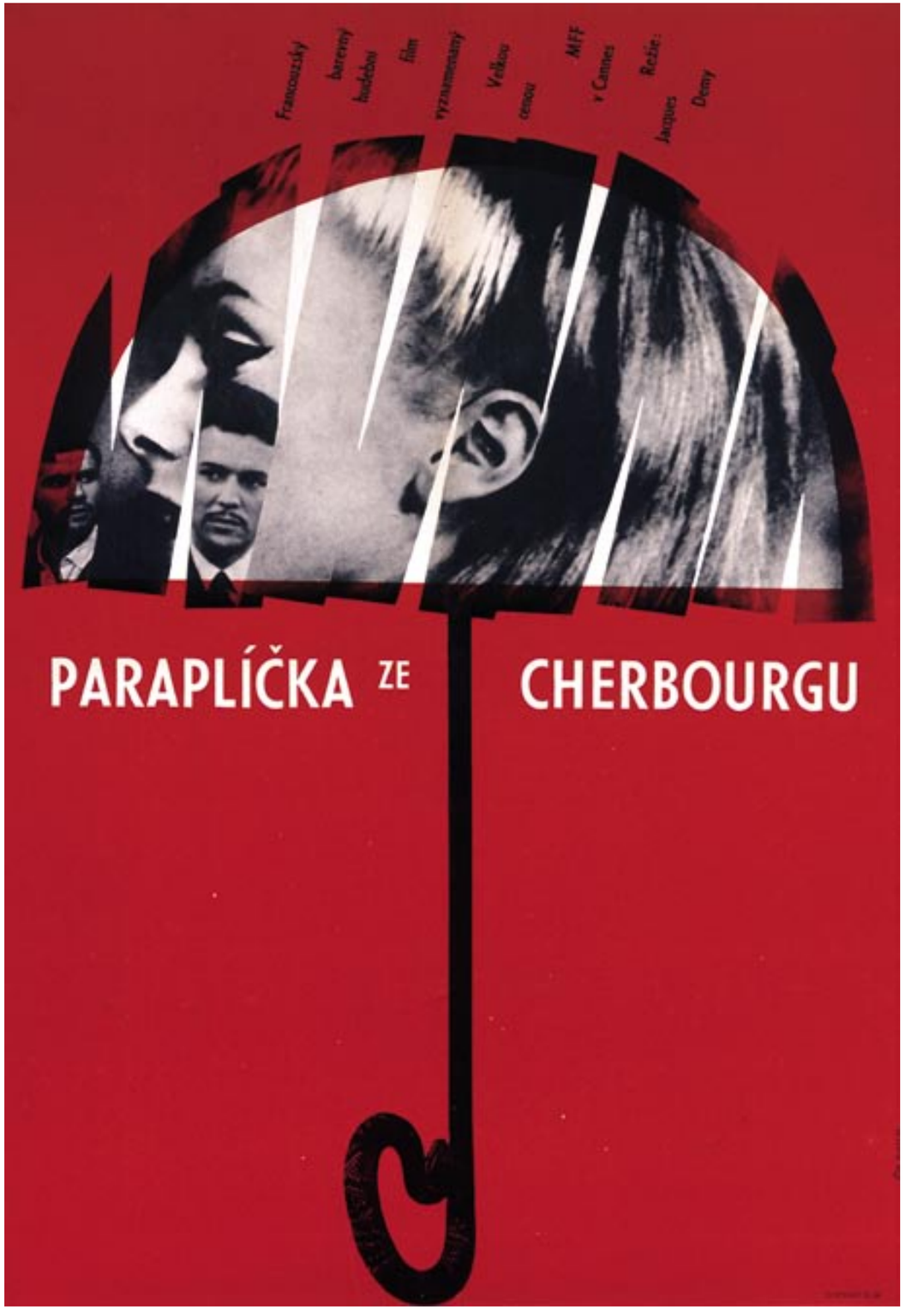
DECONSTRUCTING FILM POSTERS

Spot Colour

The late 1950s and 1960s were an exciting time in film poster design. Indeed, all art forms were going through vast transformations during this period. **Tony Nourmand** from London's Reel Poster Gallery casts his eye over a few prime examples for further examination.

Creative forces worldwide were eager to experiment with new ways of communicating and portraying the real world. The flowering of fresh, experimental design reflects the zeitgeist of this time. One of the leading trends which emerged in film posters was the use of strong, single block colours which were used to great eye-catching and audience-pulling effect.

Miroslav Vystrčil's poster for *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* is a great example of the use of block colour in film poster design. The red background is arresting, instantly catching the eye of potential cinemagoers. The use of black and white photography references the long history of the use of photomontage in Eastern European poster art, yet the simplicity and clean lines stand at the forefront of 1960s graphic design. Every piece of information is shrewdly incorporated into the final artwork. Indeed, one of the most pleasing touches in this poster is the credits; instead of their usual relegation to the bottom of the poster, they become an essential part of the design – hitting the umbrella as raindrops. ➜



LES PARAPLUIES DE CHERBOURG (1964) ORIGINAL CZECHOSLOVAKIAN / ART BY MIROSLAW VYSTRCIL

gofurther... www.reelposter.com [ARTIST] Miroslav Vystrcil [ARTIST] Pierre Étaix

MON ONCLE (1958) ORIGINAL FRENCH (SET OF 2 - RED & GREEN) / ART BY PIERRE ÈTAIX

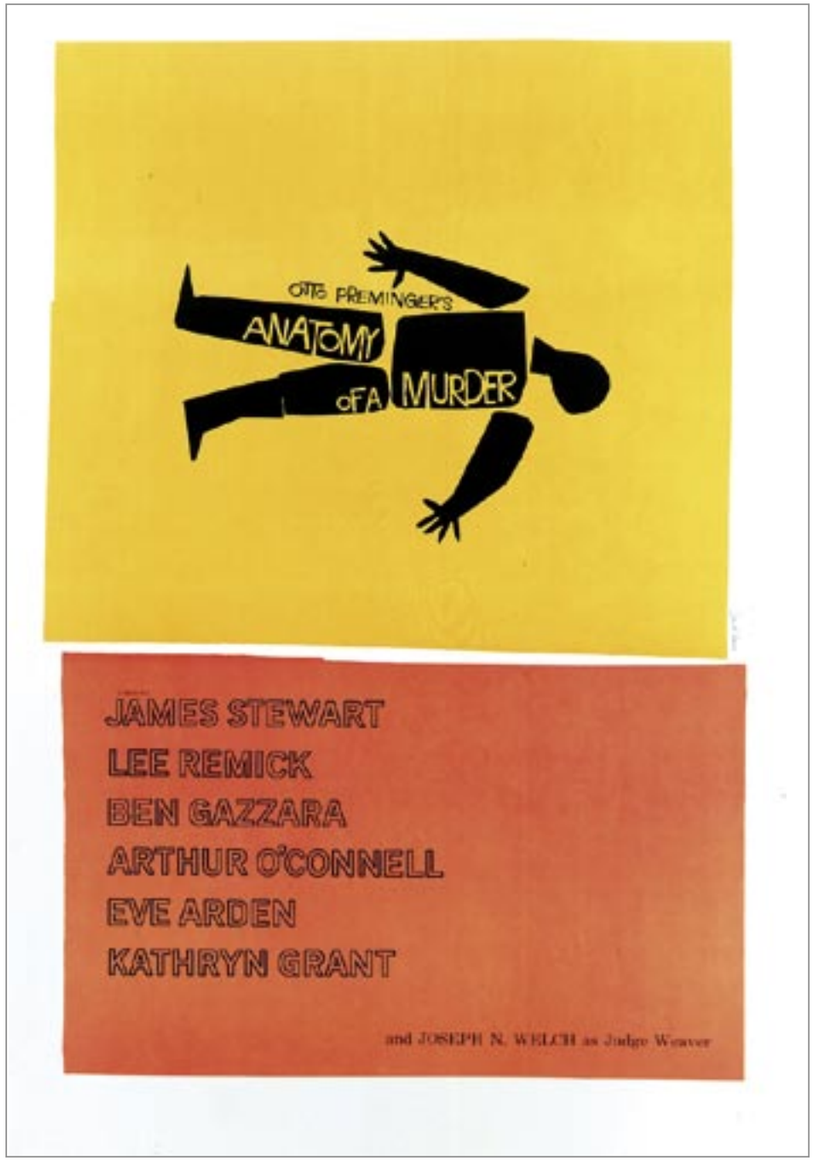
French flair

Pierre Étaix (b.1928) has worn many hats throughout his career and is a renowned director, artist, designer, clown and filmmaker. Originally training as a graphic artist, Étaix moved to Paris in his twenties and worked as an illustrator while simultaneously performing in cabaret and as a circus clown. In 1954, a chance meeting with Jacques Tati resulted in his collaboration on Tati's tour-de-force *Mon Oncle* (1958). Étaix was employed as a gag man and designer and is responsible for the striking artwork featured on the French posters for the film. The bold, simple designs suitably reflect the artist's graphic arts background.

Master craftsman

Saul Bass (1920–1996) was one of the key players in the new wave of poster design during the 1950s. Indeed, he remains one of the most innovative and influential graphic designers of the twentieth century. Bass was a pioneer of the pared down graphic – he rejected cluttered, traditional imagery in favour of geometric designs using angular shapes and primary colour schemes. His poster for *Anatomy of Murder* is a classic example of his style.

ANATOMY OF A MURDER (1959) ORIGINAL US / ART BY SAUL BASSC



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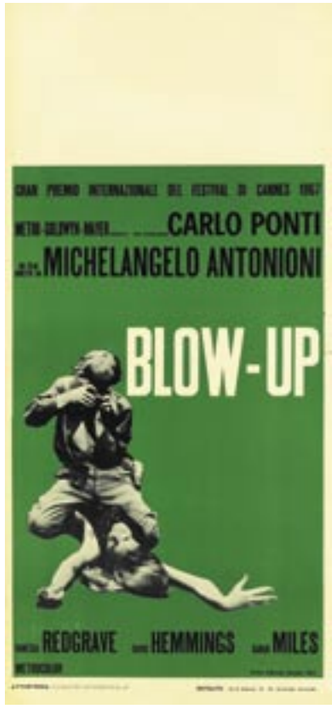

Multiple angles

Director Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* was a massive cult hit on its release (as it has remained). The main poster campaign for the movie in Italy played on the swinging sixties proclivity for bright colours and strong graphics. Renowned photographer Tazio Secchiaroli's iconic photograph was superimposed onto three different single-coloured backgrounds in red, green and yellow. Either hung on their own, or as a complete set of three, the posters had a powerful and winning impact. **[tbp]**

*** DIALOGUE AROUND THE MOVING IMAGE ***

BAGHDAD BAD

FILM INTERNATIONAL.

Published as a bi-monthly, full colour journal, *Film International* covers all aspects of film culture in a visually dynamic way.

This new breed of film magazine brings together established film scholars with renowned journalists to provide an informed and animated commentary on the spectacle of world cinema.

ISSUE AVAILABLE. WWW.FILMINT.NU

DAVID LYNCH'S INTERVIEW PROJECT

Straight Stories

Austin Lynch (son of director David Lynch) talks to *The Big Picture* about the unique filming project that has fast become an online phenomenon.

All photographs shot by Julie Pepin
Interview by Alanna Donaldson ➜

On 1 June 2009, a new project was launched on David Lynch's website. This was Interview Project, 'a road trip where people have been found and interviewed,' as Lynch straightforwardly describes it. Straightforwardness and simplicity are at the heart of the project: as Lynchian road trips go, this is more *The Straight Story* than *Wild at Heart*. The project was directed by Austin Lynch (David's son) and his friend Jason S., who spent 70 days travelling 20,000 miles across America, interviewing the people they met along the way. Every three days one of these five-minute interviews is posted online, where the project has found a captive audience. ➜

OPPOSITE JIM CARTER – ROSWELL, NEW MEXICO / BELOW HOLDREGE, NEBRASKA / BOTTOM PANGUITCH, UTAH

“The team found Anthony riding his bike down Cherry Street in Dumas, Arkansas.”

‘We tried to structure the interviews in a very simple and straightforward manner that would allow the people to tell their stories, or speak their mind, as effortlessly as possible.’

The road trip is an integral part of America’s literary and cinematic history, but this is perhaps the first that could be described as interactive: with each new interview there is a sense that we are travelling with the filmmakers, seeing the sights they see and meeting the people they meet. The interviewees are remarkably open and frank about their often troubled pasts: there are tales of alcoholism, abuse, murder and suicide. In the wrong hands, the project could have seemed intrusive or even voyeuristic, but just as the concept is original, so the execution is expert. The interviews are beautifully and sparsely filmed and the filmmakers’ fondness for their subjects is evident: it is clear that these short films are not just about these people, but also in honour of them. Here, Austin Lynch tells us more about the project.

How did Interview Project come about, and what was your father’s involvement?
Jason and I were sitting together at the kitchen table one day talking when the idea for Interview Project struck us. We were very excited by the idea of travelling around the United States and simply talking to people about their lives. My dad was involved from a very early point; we approached him with the idea and discussed the possibility of airing the series on his website. He was really excited about it and the three of us spent the next few months developing the project and gearing up for the road trip. The intros [each interview begins with a short introduction by David Lynch] came about later on and were an attempt to frame the interviews in a consistent manner; they also worked well with the ‘davidlynch.com presents’ title and were a lot of fun to shoot. ➔

ABOVE ALEDO, ILLINOIS / BELOW PASS CHRISTIAN, MISSISSIPPI

'We learned that while people may have situations in common or shared emotions and interests, they remain individuals – fascinating & unique.'

BELOW GRAHAM, TEXAS

"It's fascinating listening to people. It's something that's human and you can't stay away from it."

Can you describe the interview process?
We found people by driving through towns. When we came across someone, we would approach them and ask if we could interview them. The interviews ranged in length, but we would usually spend about two hours with each of the people. We asked them a series of biographical questions, like 'Where were you born?' or 'What was your early childhood like?', as well as a series of more open-ended, subjective questions, for example 'Do you have any regrets?' or 'How would you like to be remembered?'. We tried to structure the interviews in a very simple and straightforward manner that would allow the people to tell their stories, or speak their mind, as effortlessly as possible. Those who did agree to be interviewed seemed to do so for a variety of reasons; some of them were simply curious and others really needed to share their experiences with others.

Some of the people have sad stories to tell – was it difficult for you to stay emotionally detached?
Difficult, if not impossible. Going into the project, we really had no idea whether or not people would agree to be filmed and we were surprised by how open they were with us. Even though we spent a relatively short time together we've become very attached to the people that we interviewed.

Finally, what have you learned from the project?
From our experiences on the project and the connections that we've made with people across the country, we've learned that while people may have situations in common or shared emotions and interests, they remain individuals – fascinating and unique. **[tbp]**

To watch the interviews and find out more about Interview Project, visit the website:
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MOMENTS THAT CHANGED FILM FOREVER

Hard Target

The Adventures of Robin Hood may be over 70 years old, but this first true masterpiece of colour is still proving a hard act to follow. Words by **Scott Jordan Harris**.

There is no *Jazz Singer* of movie colour: no definitive film before which all was monochrome and after which everything that was not resplendent with colour was suddenly outmoded and unsatisfactory. Even so, there is a tendency, when moving along the reductive timelines of cinema history that we all carry in our minds, to think of two clearly delineated ages of film: one in black and white and, following that, one in colour.

In fact, colour films have been around almost since cinema's inception. Practically as soon as monochrome silents were being shown, they were being shown with painstakingly hand-tinted sequences; and, what's more, the British process Kinemacolor was capable of both filming and projecting movies in colour just 11 years after the first ever film show. While there are exceptions – most obviously D.W. Griffiths's massively controversial masterpiece *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and the equally monumental *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) with its famous red flag – very few of the films presented via these methods have become canonical. Subsequently, even fewer are remembered by anyone but technically-minded historians of filmmaking.

It was not until the 1930s and the advent of the second system of Technicolor – three-strip as opposed to two-strip Technicolor – that colour film in any sense that is still evocative today came to be. Invented and perfected by the publicity-shy pioneer of movie science Dr Herbert Kalmus, three-strip Technicolor allowed filmmakers a previously unimaginable range and intensity of colour which could be employed in the pursuit of low-key naturalism or stretched to psychedelic extremes. Indeed, the phrase 'in glorious Technicolor' has been accepted into the English language as shorthand for any experience that is vivid, vibrant and extraordinarily entertaining.

And no film was ever as glorious in Technicolor as *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Released in 1938 and directed by Michael Curtiz and William Keighley – the former of which would, of

course, create *Casablanca* five years later – the film was the first live action masterpiece of colour. It blazed a trail for the following year's *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz* by bringing the gorgeous Technicolor palette of the previous year's animated *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* into a movie starring real human beings.

The Adventures of Robin Hood's use of colour is as crucial to its effectiveness as the figure of Errol Flynn. Being seen 'in living colour' naturally made the film more realistic than its black and white counterparts while, at the same time, Technicolor's over-saturated storybook colour scheme was a perfect fit for the storybook legend of Robin Hood and helped to form the now iconic image of him in bright green tights and verdant, mud-free forests.

The movie was made at an ideal time, both in terms of audience taste and of Technicolor technology; a time when that storybook appeal could be fully and unironically embraced. The Merry Men were never as merry – and Will Scarlet was certainly never as scarlet – as in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. The film's crayon colours ensure that every object onscreen is a delight to look at. Its cloaks and candle flames; hats and shields; grass and sky; and food and flags and feathers are all impossible to forget. Indeed, *Robin Hood*'s visual vibrancy is surely the reason it proves so unforgettable after only a single viewing, while other classics of its era quite literally fade from memory unless repeatedly revisited.

Keighley and Curtiz's command of colour, however, wasn't just an astonishing treat for the eyes. It also fostered symbolism and subtext, and allowed the directors to bring something to screen that had always been conspicuously missing from action-adventure films filled with sword fights,

***Hollywood moviemakers have never realised it, but they stand as much chance of improving upon Michael Curtiz's version of* Robin Hood *as they do of bettering his version of* Casablanca.**

ABOVE ERROL FLYNN SWASHES HIS BUCKLE

beatings and battles: blood – or at least the symbolic representation of it. (This is, after all, a family film and one made when the Hays Code was in its censorious prime.)

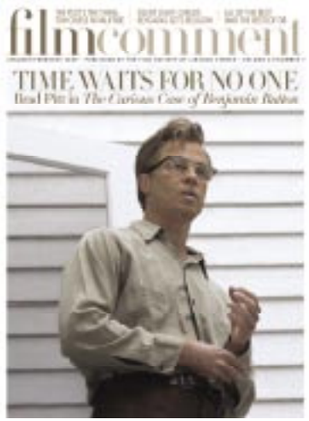
In the second scene, as Claude Rains' Prince John and Basil Rathbone's Sir Guy of Gisbourne toast their treachery in planning to usurp King Richard the Lionheart and exploit the Saxons, Rains knocks over a silver goblet. The wine inside, perfectly and impossibly red, spills across a table edge and over the floor – brilliantly (in both senses of the word) symbolizing the blood that will be spilt by their regime.

Later, the same symbolism returns. As Norman soldiers ransack a Saxon household, one hacks at a casket with an axe. Claret runs onto the floor, but not in the trickle of the previous scene; here it gushes from the axe wound, and its torrential abundance is fitting. It is no longer suggestive simply of blood that will be shed, but of blood that is being shed – and in massive quantities – now that Prince John's brutal tyranny has been fully realized.

In this way, colour is employed not only to enhance the most superficial – i.e, visual – areas of the film's appeal, but also to add depth and psychological impact to its story. It is this that accounts for the film's unassailable status as both the greatest golden age adventure film and the best Robin Hood movie. (There are also a few minor supplementary factors, like Errol Flynn being the only actor capable of competing with Douglas Fairbanks Sr. in the swashbuckling superstar stakes; the chief supporting players all being as naturally suited to their roles as Flynn was to his; and Michael Curtiz being one of finest filmmakers the world has ever produced.) Hollywood moviemakers have never realized it, but they stand as much chance of improving upon Michael Curtiz's version of *Robin Hood* as they do of bettering his version of *Casablanca*.

I noted in my opening paragraph that there is no *Jazz Singer* of film colour. *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, however, occupies something of the position in relation to cinema colour that the historic Al Jolson vehicle occupies in relation to cinema sound: it is the first film of its kind – the first live-action colour picture – that film fans, critics and historians cannot ignore. As such, it is as significant as it is entertaining. **[tbp]**

alsosee... **The Birth of a Nation (1915) / Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1939)**



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Paris

> *An artist has no home in Europe except in Paris.*
> Friedrich Nietzsche

LEFT JULIETTE BINOCHE LOOKS TO THE HEAVENS IN *THE LOVERS ON THE BRIDGE* BELOW *THE DREAMERS*

From its colourful, bustling central streets to its greyish surrounding suburbia, Paris has always been a place synonymous with cinema. Our location scout **Nicholas Page** lists a handful of the city's more evocative additions to the world of film.

The Lovers on the Bridge (1991)

Dir. Leos Carax
France, 125 minutes
Starring Juliette Binoche, Denis Lavant, Daniel Buain

Preceded by its widely documented and hugely problematic three-year production when released in 1991, Leos Carax's *The Lovers on the Bridge* details an odd relationship between two homeless street artists living on the famous Pont-Neuf bridge in Paris. Alex and Michèle, played by Carax-regulars Denis Lavant and Juliette Binoche, are caught up in a passionate romance which stems from their love of cheap wine and dancing to the beat of fireworks in the Parisian sky. The spell is broken however when the truth surfaces about Michèle's past.

The Dreamers (2003)

Dir. Bernardo Bertolucci
France/Italy, 115 minutes
Starring Michael Pitt, Eva Green, Louis Garrel

As erotic as it is enchanting, Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Dreamers* offers a risqué look at youth in the Parisian upper classes during the French student rebellions of 1968. The film centres around three young film-lovers named Matthew, Isabelle, and Théo (played by Michael Pitt, Eva Green, and Louis Garrel respectively) as they strike up a curiously sexual and borderline incestual three-way relationship that ends up confining them to the bedroom while the streets outside rage with the sounds of rioting.

Kobal (1) *The Dreamers* image coutesy of Park Circus Ltd.

The Red Balloon (1956)

Dir. Albert Lamorisse
France, 34 minutes
Starring Pascal Lamorisse, Georges Sellier, Vladimir Popov

Albert Lamorisse's celebrated 34-minute short, *The Red Balloon*, follows the adventures of a young boy who discovers a large red balloon one day while on his way to school in the Ménilmontant neighbourhood. Pascal, who is played by the director's son of the same name, soon realizes that his new, helium-filled friend has a mind of its own, following him down city streets and into school classrooms. *The Red Balloon*, which today serves as a colour record of the destroyed Belleville area of Paris, went on to win Lamorisse an Oscar for best original screenplay.

Image courtesy of Park Circus Ltd.

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Le Samouraï *mixes elements from American gangster movies, French pop culture and Japanese warrior mythology…*

LEFT FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES: *THE RED BALLOON* ABOVE ALAIN DELON CLEANS UP: *LE SAMOURAÏ*

Le Samouraï (1967)

Dir. Jean-Pierre Melville
France, 105 minutes
Starring Alain Delon, François Périer, Nathalie Delon

Starring French heart-throb Alain Delon in his definitive role as big-coated assassin Jef Costello, Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Samouraï* is a tale of one man's instincts – instincts driven by a perfectionist approach to everything from keeping a clean pair of gloves to killing people for money. *Le Samouraï*, which has blossomed into a cult classic among cinephiles over the past few decades, mixes elements from American gangster movies, French pop culture and Japanese warrior mythology to create what is essentially a neo-noir in stylish clothing.

alsosee... The 400 Blows (1959) / Play Time (1967) / Amelie (2001)

Kobal

SCREENGEM

The Snakeskin Jacket

Continuing our look at memorable objects in film, this issue's choice was an item of clothing with more than just sentimental value. A personal symbol for its owner, a source of libido, and even the cause of a bar brawl; this was the original statement piece.

Words by Daniel Steadman

LEFT NICHOLAS CAGE IS ON A ROAD TO NOWHERE IN DAVID LYNCH'S *WILD AT HEART* (1990)

Snakeskin jackets stake a dubious claim to cool. In addition to raising more than the odd ethical question, they've developed a reputation for seediness; a favourite of fading rock stars and strip-club owners. But where most wearers of this singular garment use it to demonstrate their sex appeal – and impeccable fashion sense – freewheeling drifter Sailor Ripley views it as 'a symbol of my individuality, and my belief…in personal freedom'.

Throughout *Wild at Heart*, Nic Cage's character utters this verbose slice of personal philosophy on three separate occasions. First to his beloved partner in crime, Lula Fortune, where it's met with indifference (him having told her 'Bout fifty thousand times'), second to an angry punk in a bar, where it provokes a fight, and lastly to a bartender, who dismisses Sailor's eloquence as 'Fuckin' honky cracker mumbo jumbo'.

As in many David Lynch films, Ripley's snakeskin jacket is an object of attention for little or no discernible reason – an enigma entirely of itself. Hideous as it is, the clothing's appeal is entirely bound up in Cage's manic, exuberant performance (Lynch called him 'a jazz actor'). Protective, romantic and completely wired, the twisted heroism of Sailor Ripley is unmistakably embodied by his snakeskin jacket. **[tbp]**

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The Musical Comedy Films of Grigorii Aleksandrov
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By Rimgaila Salys

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Grigorii Aleksandrov's musical comedy films, created with composer Isaak Dunaevskii, were the most popular Russian cinema of the 1930s–1940s. Based on studio documents, press materials and interviews with surviving members of Aleksandrov's film crews, this book presents the untold history of the films, situating them in the Stalin era, and suggesting new interpretations of individual texts.
Salys approaches the films from the standpoint of western criticism, arguing that although Socialist Realism attempted to suppress the genre, Aleksandrov's films consistently preserved the archetypes of American musical, including its comedic tradition.

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Moulding the Star

By Pauline Small

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This unique book sets out to highlight the career of Sophia Loren as a prime example of a highly original rise to fame in a European context. Small emphasizes that although primarily an Italian star, Loren's career crossed the boundaries of a shifting network of film-making ventures that spanned Hollywood and Europe.
Loren was one of the leading figures in the 1950s whose professional achievements, Small argues, were undervalued and to a degree remain so. Using written and visual materials ranging from government archives to academic journals, from the popular press to her major films, *Sophia Loren: Moulding the Star* gives a fuller understanding of the forces, commercial, industrial and cultural, that combined to forge her enduring star status and the cult of a major film personality.

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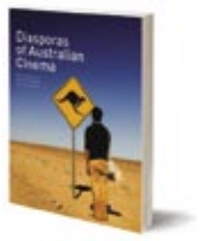

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IMITATION IS THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY

Seeing Double

Blue suits, red dresses, white walls, and a copious amount of lens flare: **Nicholas Page** details the striking similarities between Jean-Luc Godard's *A Woman is a Woman* (1961) and Paul Thomas Anderson's *Punch-Drunk Love* (2002).

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, or so they say, and if this is indeed the case then it's clear that California-born filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson sincerely loves his films. All it takes is one brief trip through the talented 39-year-old's filmography to spot the references: Kubrick, Renoir, Altman, the list goes on and on. Perhaps the most obvious one of all, however, is his use of Jean-Luc Godard's cultish *A Woman is a Woman* (1961) as inspiration for the 2002 film *Punch-Drunk Love*.

In subverting the romance genre just as Godard did so many years before, Anderson uses bold primary colours to lovingly recreate Godard's aesthetic; placing his two main characters in a blue suit and red dress upon a monochromatic set, bathing them in colour and even going one further by using this colour to reflect the protagonist's constantly shifting emotions.

ADAM SANDLER AND EMILY WATSON (PUNCH DRUNK LOVE)

JEAN-CLAUDE BRIALY AND ANNA KARIINA (A WOMAN IS A WOMAN)

go further Sunrise (1927) / Magnolia (1999) / La maman et la putain (1973) / À bout de souffle (1960)

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Back in Cinemas

Putting the movies back where they belong...

This edition of The Big Picture has been produced in partnership with Park Circus, who are committed to bringing classic films back to the big screen.

Henri-Georges Clouzot's Inferno opened from 6 November at Ciné Lumière and ICA London, and from 13 November at BFI Southbank, with subsequent screenings at selected cinemas around the country.

The restored version of **The Red Shoes** is opening from 11 December at BFI Southbank, QFT Belfast, Watershed Bristol, Arts Picturehouse Cambridge, Light House Dublin, Filmhouse Edinburgh, Cinema City Norwich, Showroom Sheffield and cinemas nationwide.

More details of cinema screenings of these and other classic movies from the Park Circus catalogue can be accessed via: **www.backincinemas.com**

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HENRI-GEORGES CLOUZOT'S INFERNO

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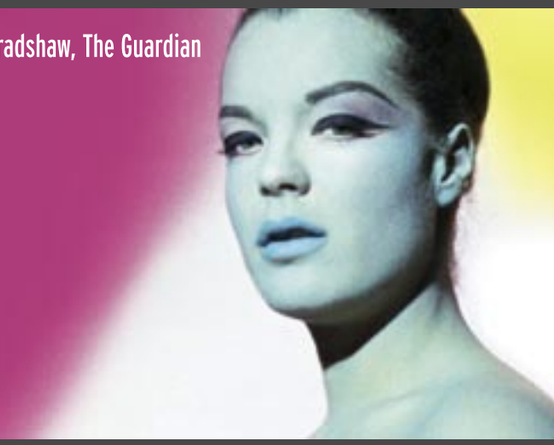

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